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AUTHOR	Woolley, Jill
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ABSTRACT

This lesson uses the informational power of the Internet for a prewriting activity. Through various Internet sites, students gather information about the history and celebration practices associated with Veterans Day. Following the prewriting activity, students write content-rich poems that honor veterans. During the 45-minute prewriting session, the 30 minutes of class discussion, and the three 30-minute writing sessions, the grade 6 to 8 students will: effectively use their reading skills to identify main ideas and accurately record information from numerous resources; develop content-rich notes to use for a poetry writing assignment; and learn about the origins of holidays and cultural practices in the United States. The instructional plan, lists of resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. A poetry prewriting web search form is attached. (RS)

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Honoring Our Veterans Through Poetry Prewriting

Author

Jill Woolley
Goochland, Virginia

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Grade Band

6-8

Estimated Lesson Time

Prewriting = 45 minutes
Class discussion = 30 minutes
Writing = three 30-minute sessions

Overview

This lesson supports sixth- through eighth-grade students' exploration of multiple Web resources to gather and synthesize information, and to create and communicate this information through poetry. Additionally, the activity requires students to acquire new knowledge and to expand upon their understanding of themselves and the culture of the United States. Students are encouraged to participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of their classroom community. Extension activities include publishing their poetry on the Web, creating cards using the students' poems to send to local veterans' hospitals, and creating a display with accompanying artwork for Veterans Day.

From Theory to Practice

Roberts, S.K. (2002) Taking a technological path to poetry prewriting. *The Reading Teacher, 55,* 678-687.

- The Internet provides quick and easy access to a wealth of information that may expand upon student experiences.
- The Internet provides multiple entry points to the prewriting task so that students can focus on aspects of the topic (e.g., historical, technological, visual) that interest them. Additionally it appeals to various learning styles and types of natural intelligences, such as linguistic, visual, and hands-on interactive learners.
- A prewriting activity is useful for gathering concrete information about a topic from a variety of sources.

Student Objectives

Students will

- Effectively use their reading skills to identify main ideas and accurately record information from numerous resources
- Develop content-rich notes to use for a poetry writing assignment
- Learn about the origins of holidays and cultural practices in the United States

Resources

- CyberStats: Get the Facts! handout
- Celebrate! Holidays in the U.S.A.

CS 512 110

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- Activities for Veterans Day
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Frequently Asked Veterans Day Questions
- Origins of Veterans Day

Instructional Plan

Preparation

1. Before teaching this lesson, familiarize your students with the poetry form of couplets. You can do this by reading aloud examples of poetry in couplets to the class. Some examples that may be used are from the very basic Dr. Seuss rhymes in *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish* (Random House, 1981) or from the text *My America, A Poetry Atlas of the United States* (Simon and Schuster, 2000).

2. Reserve one class session at your computer lab.

3. Bookmark the following websites:

   Department of Veterans Affairs. This site provides links to content-rich web pages about the history of Veterans Day and the current celebrations associated with Veterans Day. The site includes a wonderful link to Posters for Veterans Day from 1978 to the present.

   Frequently Asked Veterans Day Questions. This FAQ section provides answers to questions about both the history of Veterans Day and ways that Veterans Day is celebrated.

   Origins of Veterans Day. This site, hosted by Veterans of Foreign Wars, focuses on the origins of Veterans Day.

   Activities for Veterans Day. This site details 16 ways to celebrate Veterans Day.

   Celebrate! Holidays in the U.S.A. This site is hosted by the United States Embassy in Stockholm and offers a more international, and indeed, global, description of the history and cultural practices associated with Veterans Day.

4. Make one copy of the CyberStats: Get the Facts! handout per student.

Instruction and Activities

1. Activate students' prior knowledge by asking, "What can you tell me about the Veterans Day holiday?" (Possible responses may include visiting a grandfather or having a school assembly.) Also ask them "What would you like to know about this holiday?"---5 minutes

2. Set up the learning activity by telling students, "Today we are going to go on a cyber search to explore the Veterans Day holiday, an important day of remembrance in the United States. You will be searching for answers to questions about why this holiday was started, who celebrates it and why, and how it is typically celebrated. I am going to give you a CyberStats: Get the Facts! handout, which includes a list of websites for you to explore. This handout also includes a set of questions for you to answer. In addition to the questions listed, develop two questions of your own about Veterans Day and add those questions to the CyberStats: Get the Facts! handout.

   The websites are bookmarked on your computer so you may simply boot up, log in, and go to your

bookmarked sites."---5 minutes

3. Monitor students' progress by moving through the lab and giving assistance as needed. Encourage students to delve into as much detail as they are able to in their notes. Students may assist one another with elements relating to technology and reading of informational texts. Important ideas may be identified through text clues, key words, and other skimming skills.---25 minutes

4. After about 25 minutes, students should be finished researching the seven questions listed on the CyberStats: Get the Facts! handout. Focus them as a whole group and introduce the transition to building a writer's community. Elicit feedback about their findings. For example, for question 1, "What is a veteran?" ask students what they found out about veterans during their web search. Time permitting, discussion of findings will continue for 30 minutes. If time does not allow, plan for a 30-minute discussion prior to the introduction of the poetry writing activity in Step 5.

5. End the class session by telling students, "Now you have a great deal of information and details about Veterans Day. Tomorrow you will use this research to write a poem honoring our veterans. Your poem will be written in couplets, which uses a total of twelve lines or six pairs of rhyming lines. Review your research for homework. You can further prepare for your poetry writing session tomorrow by finding rhyming pairs of words based on your research."

Extensions

- Publish students' poetry on the Web
- Create cards using the students' poems to send to a local veterans' hospital
- Create artwork to go along with the poems
- Write an informational essay using the information gathered about Veterans Day
- Create a display with poems, essays, and accompanying artwork for Veterans Day

Student Assessment/Reflections

- Teacher observation and anecdotal notes based on monitoring during the learning activity and subsequent class discussion
- Student responses to the questions on the CyberStats: Get the Facts! handout
- The prewriting activity can be counted as a percentage of the final project, which is a 12-line poem in couplets honoring veterans.

IRA/NCTE Standards

1 - Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

2 - Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

4 - Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style,

vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

5 - Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

7 - Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks,-video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

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CyberStats: Get the Facts!

Poetry Prewriting Web Search

Use the following websites, which are bookmarked on your computer, to find answers to the questions listed on this sheet.

Department of Veterans Affairs: **http://www.va.gov/vetsday/**

Frequently Asked Veterans Day Questions: **http://www.va.gov/vetsday/page.cfm?pg=11**

Origins of Veterans Day: **http://www.vfw.org/amesm/origins.shtml**

Activities for Veterans Day: **http://www.va.gov/pubaff/celebam/acts4vd.htm**

Celebrate! Holidays in the U.S.A.: **http://www.usis.usemb.se/Holidays/celebrate/Veterans.html**

Questions:

1. What is a veteran?

2. What is the purpose of Veterans Day?

3. When was Veterans Day first celebrated?

4. How is Veterans Day typically celebrated?

5. What type of people are veterans, and do you know anyone who has served?

6.

7.

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